21 September 2005

Original: English

Committee on Conferences
Substantive session of 2005

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Mr. Enno **Drofenik** (Austria)

II. Calendar of conferences and meetings

C. Improved utilization of conference-servicing resources and facilities

Meeting statistics of United Nations organs and consultations with bodies concerning utilization of the conference services available to them

Introduction and overview

1. At its 465th meeting, on 19 September 2005, the Committee reviewed the statistical data and analysis contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the pattern of conferences concerning the planned and actual utilization of conference resources allocated to a core sample of bodies that met in New York, Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi in 2004 (A/60/93, paras. 3-15 and annex I). The representative of the Secretariat noted that over the past few years the overall utilization factor had steadily improved. There had also been an improvement in the number of sessions with utilization over the benchmark and an improvement in meeting ratios and planning accuracy. For 2004, the overall utilization factor for the four duty stations was 83 per cent, which was six percentage points higher than the factor for 2003. For New York, the rate had risen to 79 per cent from 70 per cent in 2003. The number of bodies underutilizing their resources had been reduced by five. The improvements were due to the closer involvement of meeting planners in the programming of sessions, as well as to the conscientious efforts by secretariats and bureaux to utilize allocated resources more efficiently. Meeting planners continued to examine the reasons for any utilization below the established benchmark of 80 per cent.

05-51682 (E)

2. The Committee also heard an oral report by the Chairman of the Committee on his consultations with bodies that had consistently utilized less than the applicable benchmark figure of their allocated resources for the previous three sessions. The Chairman noted that the proactive policy of meeting planners had yielded positive results and had notably improved the accuracy of planning fully serviced meetings. He welcomed in particular the willingness of the secretariats and bureaux of the bodies concerned to engage in serious discussion of their situation. Nine bodies had consistently utilized less than the benchmark figure of 80 per cent of allocated resources, leading to a significant loss of financial resources and to unutilized conference resources that might otherwise have been available for reassignment. The number of cancelled meetings with interpretation had declined as a result of measures implemented to streamline and better coordinate planning. However, late starts and early endings of meetings continued to reflect negatively on statistics. The sharing of best practices was presented as an effective way to improve the situation and to determine the specific utilization patterns of individual bodies. It was difficult to identify a uniform solution, however, since each body had its own individual programme of work and method of conducting business. The Chairman recommended that consultations with the bodies concerned be conducted on a more regular basis, and that they be informed of their meetings statistics on a weekly basis.

Discussion

3. With respect to the methodology used to calculate the utilization factor, delegations wished to know whether informal meetings and cancellations were included in the statistics. It was explained that informal meetings were factored in, and that cancellations were not counted as wasted time if they were made before the programme of meetings was finalized. Even if a late cancellation occurred, it was not counted as wasted time as long as it was offset by the reassignment of the interpreting team to a related body. The Electronic Meetings Planning and Resource Allocation System (eMeets) made it possible to have up-to-the-minute statistics. As a result, consultations between meeting planners and users of conference facilities could be carried out more effectively on the basis of utilization statistics. It was agreed that efforts should be made to encourage users to make more efficient use of conference facilities, whether by requesting shorter blocks of time for their meetings or by convening informal meetings in smaller conference rooms to free up the main conference rooms and interpretation services for other users. The primary consideration for all users should be to ensure the best use of the Organization's resources on a system-wide basis.